

TRENDS IN ROMANIA'S TOURISM DEMAND AND OFFER IN THE MOUNTAIN RESORTS DURING THE PERIOD 2010-2019

Agatha POPESCU, Alina MARCUTA, Liviu MARCUTA, Cristina TINDECHE

University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, 59 Marasti, District 1, Zip code 011464, Bucharest, Romania, Phone: +40213182564, Fax: +40213182888, Emails: agatha_popescu@yahoo.com, alinamarcuta@yahoo.com, liviumarcuta@yahoo.com, tindecche_cristina@yahoo.com

Corresponding author: agatha_popescu@yahoo.com

Abstract

The paper analyzed the dynamics of tourist demand and offer in Romania's mountain resorts in the period 2010-2019 using the statistical data collected from National Institute of Statistics in order to identify the main trends and suggest solutions for enhancing this sector of the national tourism. Fixed basis index, structural index and comparison method have been used for data processing. Romania has more than 100 mountain resorts, with a wonderful scenery and breathtaking splendors and treasure which must be discovered. More than 95 resorts are suitable for skiing. The most attractive mountain resorts are Poiana Brasov, Sinaia, Busteni, Predeal, Azuga, Paltinis, Vatra Dornei, Ranca and Transalpina. Over 2.3 million tourists spent their vacations in Romania's mountain resorts in 2019, being 2.8 times more than 2010 and accounting for 17.2% of total Romania's visitors. Romanians are dominant with a share of 91%. Not only the number of Romanians is growing up, but also the foreign visitors number which reached over 196 thousand in 2019, that is 2.2 times more than in 2010. The overnight stays increased 2.8 times, accounting for 4.42 million in 2019. In the mountain resorts there are 2,370 units for tourists accommodation, of which about 70% were represented by tourist and agro-tourist guesthouses, 8.7% tourist villas, 7.9% hotels and 6.2% chalets etc. Their number represent 27.5% of Romania's tourism accommodation units. In 2019, the offer of places (beds) was 63,943, by 80.4% more than in 2010 and representing 17.8% of the total offer in Romania's tourism. The beauty of the natural mountain landscapes, biodiversity, local economy, humans, cultural and historical heritage have to be better valorized, developed and promoted to enhance mountain tourism to increase its efficiency and competitiveness. Mountain skiing resorts have to continue their efforts to improve the access roads, buildings, equipments, installations, facilities, to enlarge the range of activities and to offer to tourists unforgettable vacations and to entirely cover their expectations.

Key words: mountain resorts, tourism, demand, offer, trends, Romania

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the most dynamic branch of the world economy. In 2019, it reached 1.5 international tourist arrivals by +6% more than in 2018. In 2018, world tourism receipts accounted for USD 1.7 trillion [63, 64].

The continuous growth in international tourist flow has sustained the increase of income in the field of travel and tourism year by year, reflecting a strong positive correlation between these two key indicators [26]. More than this, this means an increased contribution of tourism and travel to the global GDP and each country where tourism is well developed [38].

The increased number of tourists' arrivals on various regions of the globe reflects a higher

and higher demand which had to receive a positive feed-back from the offer side, in terms of accommodation capacity and other facilities, boarding, and a large variety of activities, service quality to satisfy visitors' expectations [24, 29, 33, 35].

Many countries, especially the top destination countries are engaged in developing effective tourism strategies destined to face much better to the high competitiveness in tourism and travel industry [36].

Mountains are of high attraction among tourists' destinations and contributes by 15-20% to tourism industry turnover at the global level.

The attractiveness of the mountains in tourists' preferences is justified by the

beautiful natural landscapes, the majesty of the mountain peaks, the charming valleys, the clean, fresh and cool air, the unique biodiversity, the variety of topography and climates, the large ranges of activities which could be practiced, the chance for meeting local culture, history, and traditions, a chance for "charging the batteries" and recover health, for escaping from the urbanized life, improving health and wellness, a chance for contemplation and meditation [1, 9].

Mountains have a complex functionality and offer a large range of activities which could be practiced. Among them the most important are: walking, leisure, recreation, animation, health recovery (climate treatment, hydrotherapy, spa therapy etc), hiking, trekking, climbing, winter sports (sleighbing, skiing, snowboarding, skating), adventure and extreme sports (bungee jumping, paragliding, mountaineering), water sports (swimming, diving, river rafting, canyoning, canoeing), hunting and fishery, scientific tourism (speleological tourism, caving, visiting the national parks, the biosphere mountain reservations), bird watching, photo-safari, cultural tourism (visiting cities, villages, enjoying meeting history, cultural traditions, customs, gastronomy etc), rural tourism, agro-tourism and eco tourism [1, 7, 9, 10, 16].

The higher and higher growth in tourist flow to the mountain areas mainly in winter and summer seasons, but also in any other season and week-ends has contributed to the economic and social development and to the awareness that the values and treasures of the mountains must be protected and preserved.

Europe and especially the European Union is the most visited part of the world by tourists. In 2018, total international arrivals in Europe accounted for 710 million, accounting for 51% of the global tourists.

Mountains cover 19% European continent (Russian Federation and Caucasus states excluded), and their share is 24% in Eastern and Southern Europe and 15% in the Northern and Western Europe [44].

Austria, Switzerland, France, Spain, Italy, Norway, are countries with a high developed mountain tourism industry. Austria is well-

known for tourism contribution to GDP (4%) and for 75% contribution of alpine tourism to national tourism receipts.

The Alps and their mountain resorts offer the best facilities and the highest quality services as alpine tourism is strictly regulated and controlled to satisfy tourists the best and at the same time to preserve the environment quality and biodiversity.

At the global level, there are 475 mountains, which have 475 protected areas in 65 countries, 140 mountain regions are designated as biosphere reserves and protected areas include national parks [1].

Mountain resorts are well spread all over the world and many of them offer a multiple range of opportunities for spending holidays grace to the enhanced promotion made by multimedia websites. IT facilities help tourists to search the desired destinations forming them a visual impression about what to expect when they will arrive there and how to plan their trip booking in advance transportation tickets, and accommodation reservation. This new tools of information and the new tourist behavior have enabled tourism and travel industry to improve its strategy and management and to benefit of the competitive advantages and build benchmarks and mountain brands of high attraction for the future clients [62].

Snow sports industry has a special place within the mountain tourism industry. In 67 countries, winter sports are the main attraction and more than 2,084 ski resorts all together have an accommodation capacity of 6 million places (beds). Globally, each year about 130 million skiers visit these countries to enjoy practicing snow sports. A number of 1,600 ski resorts receive annually about 80% of the skiers. And about 44% skiers' visits are in the Alps skiing resorts [14].

However, at the global level, 100 countries are able to offer ski lovers the chance to practice snow sports either outdoor (85%) or indoor (15%). Of the 2,084 ski resorts existing in the world, 37% are situated in the Alps, 11% in Western Europe, other 11% in Eastern part of Europe and Central Asia, 21% in America and 19% in Asia and Pacific [65].

Among the Eastern European countries, Romania has become well known for its mountain resorts where skiing is the main attraction for many Romanian and also for foreigners who affirmed that the facilities for accommodation and skiing are cheaper compared to other countries. Romania registers in average about 1.2 million skier visits annually and their number is growing, the most preferred mountain resorts being; Poiana Brasov, Sinaia, Busteni, Predeal, Azuga, Paltinis, Birsa, Vatra Dornei and Transalpina [65].

In this context, the present study is destined to analyze the main mountain resorts, tourist demand and offer in this area of Romania in the period 2010-2019 in order to identify the main trends and in what measure mountain industry is developing and strengthening.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data collection

The data utilized in this study were picked up from Tempo Online data base of the National Institute of Statistics and also from other sources which are mentioned as references.

The following specific indicators used in this study have been the following ones: (i) number of mountain resorts; (ii) tourists' preferences for mountain resorts and their motivations; (iii) number of tourist accommodation units in mountain resorts; (iv) number of places (beds) in mountain resorts; (v) tourists' arrivals in mountain resorts; (vi) overnight stays in mountain resorts.

Methodological aspects

In this study, there were used the following methods:

Index method, based on Fixed basis Index, $I_{t/t_0} = (X_t/X_0)100$, where X_t is the level of the indicator X in the last year of the analysis, 2019, and X_0 is the level of the same indicator X in the first year of the analysis, 2010.

The structural index (SI%), reflecting the share of tourism indicators carried out in mountain resorts in the national tourism data.

The trend method based mainly on linear regression model, $Y = bx + a$.

The comparison method was destined to estimate the differences between the level of

the indicators at the end of the analyzed period and the their level at the beginning of the studied decade.

The results were explained and commented and presented in graphics and tables. The main ideas resulted from this research were presented at conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Romania - an attractive tourist destination

Romania has become a more and more attractive destination during the last decade, as proved by the increased number of tourist arrivals which reached 13,374,943 in the year 2019, being 2.2 times higher than in 2010. The number of international tourists' arrivals accounted for 2,683,748 in the year 2019 compared to 1,346,343 tourists in the year 2010, meaning 1.99 times more. The share of foreign tourists increased from 17.23% in 2010 to 20% in 2019 [42].

The total number of overnight stays in Romania reached 30 million in the year 2019, being by 87.4 % higher than in the year 2010. The overnight stays belonging to foreign tourists accounted for 5.29 million in 2019, being by 91.2% higher than in the year 2010. The share of foreigners' stays in the total overnight stays in Romania's tourism was 17.58% in 2019, a little bit higher than in 2010.

Tourist flows in Romania are oriented to many destinations among which the most important are: Bucharest, the capital of Romania, Transilvania region with its beautiful medieval cities like Brasov, Sibiu and Clu-Napoca, fortresses, castles, mountains and hills, Bucovina region with its mountains, old monasteries and traditions, Maramures region with its charming attractions, the Danube Delta, a biosphere reservation with its treasures of flora and fauna, the mountain areas with their majestic peaks, magnificent landscapes, wonderful skiing slopes, the seaside resorts at the Black Sea [20, 22, 27, 30, 34, 39, 40, 41, 43].

Tourism has been permanently adapted to the demand growth and has become a more and more better developed sector in the economy, creating jobs, assuring a high professionalism

employees, improving the infrastructure, enlarging the offer of accommodation units and places, increasing service quality and assuring a better correlation between price and service quality and facilities. As a result, tourism turnover in Romania registered an ascending and in 2019 accounted for Euro 5 Billion, the highest performance during the last 30 years. Therefore, efficiency in tourism industry has also raised [8, 23, 25, 28, 32, 37].

Romania's mountain areas

About 23% of Romania's surface of 238,397 km² is represented by mountains. After the Alps, the Carpathian Mountains comes on the 2nd position as the largest mountains in Europe. The arc of the Carpathians extends over 1,000 kilometers through the center of the country, covering an area of 71,000 square kilometers. They are low to medium altitude and are no wider than 100 kilometers.

They are characterized by the longitudinal and transverse fragmentation in valleys, many summits which could reach up to 2,256 meters and many settlements located at over 1,200 m altitude. The highest peak is Moldoveanu has 2,544 m altitude and is situated in The Fagaras Mountains in the Southern Carpathians.

Snow layer varies from a mountain area to another, but it lasts from the end of November till the end of March and sometimes in April [67].

Romania's main mountain resorts

Romania has 95 ski resorts, summing 211 kilometers of slopes and 151 ski lifts. Many of them have lightning installations allowing night skiing and telecars and telechairs, installations for artificial snow [56].

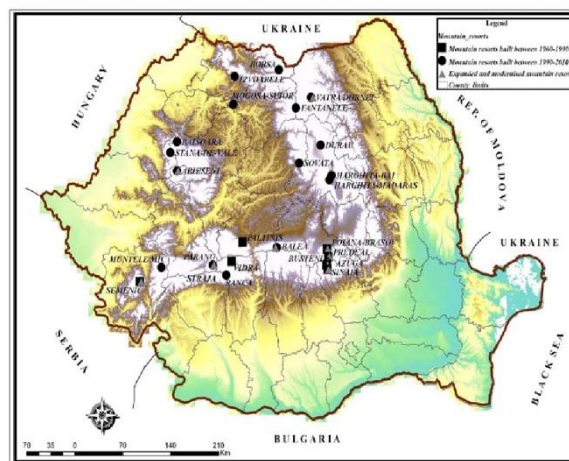
About 588,000 skiers of which 5% foreigners are every year in Romanian mountain resorts and their total visits accounts for 1.2 million [65].

The most known mountain resort is Poiana Brasov, at about 14 km upward from the beautiful medieval city of Brasov.

The Prahova Valley is also well known for its long and valuable necklace of mountain resorts and localities, among which the most important are: Sinaia, Predeal, Busteni, and

Azuga situated at about 122 -134 km distance from Bucharest, the capital of Romania.

Other importance mountain resorts are: Straja, in Hunedoara County, Paltinis, in Sibiu County, Borsa and Vatra Dornei in the North part of Romania.



Map 1. The main mountain resorts in Romania

Source: [15].

Poiana Brasov resort, nick named the Glade of the Sun is situated at the altitude of 1,030 m, at the foot of the Postavaru Mountain, in the Southern Carpathians. It is the most luxury mountain resort, especially assaulted by lovers of winter sports. Here, it is the largest place for skiing, there are 12 skiing slopes (Olympic, downhill ski slopes, slopes for huge slalom, trampoline), a cable car, gondola lift, seven ski lifts and artificial snow cannons.

It is the resort with the longest length of the skiing slopes accounting for 13.7 km, 5 km ski routes, 10 lifts for the guests' transportation. The winter sports could be practiced between 941m and 1,783m.

Also, it is a lake, a skating ring, and enough place for sleighing and horse-drawn sleigh ride. The hotels and restaurants serve traditional and international dishes.

Poiana Brasov is preferred by British tourists which affirm that it is the cheapest luxury mountain destination in Europe.

From the peak of the Postavaru Mountain, situated at the altitude of 1,799 meters, tourists could admire the beauty of the mountain scenery [4, 51].

Tourists have also the opportunity to visit the City of Brasov, named Kronstadt in the old times, due to the German population, the old center of the city in the Council Square, the Black Church built in the 14th century in a gothic style, with its high value collection of over 400 Persian carpets and the old German organ, listen an organ concert, the Saint Nicholas Church where it was founded the first Romanian School and Diaconu Coresi founded the first printing press, to see the old manuscripts and the library, the Art Museum where many masterpieces of the Romanian and foreign artists could be admired, to attend performances at the Brasov Opera House, to listen concerts played by "Gheorghe Dima" Philharmonic Orchestra of Brasov, in September to attend the well known "The Golden Deer" International Music Festival, to admire the fortification and the walls and towers of the old medieval fortress and the beautiful architecture of the houses built in various styles (romanic, gothic, classic, baroque, rococo, renaissance styles.

The cultural treasures of the City of Brasov is just a part of the rich cultural and historical heritage of Transilvania [19, 21, 68].

Tourists could find various accommodation alternatives such as hotels, hostels, villas, and also many tourist and agro-tourist guesthouses in the City of Brasov or in its surroundings [11, 12].

Sinaia resort is situated at 122 km North from Bucharest, at the altitude of 850 m and at the foot of the Bucegi Mountains. It is named the Pearl of the Prahova Valley due to its beautiful landscapes, mountain sceneries, fresh air, elegant hotels and villas, cultural and historical past. Its name comes from Mountain Sinai and it is a city related with the locality Aosta from Italy.

Sinaia is full of tourists almost all the year, the main attractions are: The Royal Peles Castle built for King Carol I of Romania in a neo-renaissance architectural style between 1873 and 1914, in its beautiful interior the visitors could admire the elegant furniture, chandeliers, carpets, and paintings; Pelisor Castle, Foisorul Hunting Lodge, Sinaia Monastery built in the 17th century with its wonderful frescos, Ialomicioara Cave, George

Enescu, the greatest Romanian composer's Memorial House, the Sinaia Casino from "Dimitrie Ghica" Park, Franz Josef Rock Poiana Stanii situated at 1,300 m altitude, Omu Peak, for which tourists have to trek up to 2,505 m, Bolboci Lake, an artificial lake, created by damming Ialomita's waters at 1,460 m, heigh-end skiing, carp track is one of the most popular tracks for skiers from all over the world. In Sinaia there's a slope for everyone, Valea Dorului being a great great choice for beginners. The cable car brings the tourists on the Bucegi Mountains plateau in a few minutes.

For skiing, there are 17.9 km of slopes and 5 km ski routes, 10 lifts are available for guests' transportation. The winter sports could be practiced at the altitude of 1,006 and 2,090 m [4, 45, 46, 52].

Predeal resort is located in Braşov County, and has the highest altitude for an urban locality in Romania, 1,110 m over the sea level. It is situated at the foot of the Bucegi Mountains in their North East side. In Predeal, tourists may find 5,000 places for accommodation in hotels, hostels, villas, guesthouses, 2 skating rings, 8 ski slopes, a trampoline for ski jumpings, the main slope Clabucet is endowed with installations for night skiing and also with installations for artificial snow. The mountain scenery is breathtaking in all the seasons, climate is pleasant, in summers is mild, but in winters is cold. About 7.4 km of slopes are available for skiing and snowboarding and also 0.6 km ski routes. 2 lifts are available for tourists' transportation. The winter sports are practiced usually at the altitude of 1,040 and 1,451 meters [4, 53].

Busteni resort is also situated in the Prahova Valley at the altitude of 850-900 m. It is bordered to the west by the Bucegi (Omu Peak 2,507m) and to the east by the Baiu Mountains (Neamţu Peak - 1,923 m). The main tourists' attractions are: Cantacuzino Palace, the Royal Church, the Cezar Petrescu Museum, the Urlătoarea waterfall, Babele and the Sfinx rocks formed by wind, the Elders Group Hermes, Altarul (The Altar), Porumbelul (The pigeon), the Bucegi National Park, the Cross Glade, the Kalinderul Glade.

The ski slopes have 2.9 km and 2 lifts are available for tourists' transportation. The winter sports could be practiced at the altitude of 1,000-1,295.

Busteni is one of the most preferred resorts in the Prahova Valley by many tourists their flow being higher and higher year by year [4, 5, 13, 60].

Azuga resort is also situated in the Prahova Valley, at the altitude of 850-950 m, and lies at the confluence with the river Azuga, at the foothills of Bucegi and Baiului Mountains, in the vicinity of the peaks Sorica and Cazacu. It is a climatical and tourist resort, being known mainly for winter sports. The main tourists' attractions are: the Trinity Church built in 1902, the Monument of the Heroes, the Rhein Wine Cellars, The Secular Beech, the Mamut Tree, the White Tree, the Daffodil Glade, the Turk Valley and the Cazacu Valley.

In Azuga there are 8 km slopes for skiing and snowboarding and 6 lifts for guests' transportation. The winter sport are practiced at the elevations of 978 and 1,539 meters [3, 49].

Paltinis resort is situated in Sibiu County, at 32 km distance from Sibiu City, and at the altitude of 1,440 m. Due to its location at the foot of the Cindrel Mountains, it has fresh air, and numerous hiking routes. Across the time, since its foundation in 1894 as the first resort in Romania, it has been developing and constitutes a high attraction for many visitors.

The most important objectives for tourists are: the historical heritage which consists of The House of the Tourists (1894), (The House of the Doctors (1895), Monaco Hall (1898), Constantin Noica's tomb at Schit Church. Also, the ski and snowboard slopes are available for a long period of time and are well endowed with telechair, a teleski, and a baby - lift, and also a ski school assures high quality training to the ones who want to get skiing skills. There are separately two slopes for beginners and many other activities.

The skiing slopes have 1.6 km and 2 lifts are available for tourists' transportation. The winter sports area is situated at the altitude of 1,400 and 1,667 m [4, 18, 50].

In Paltinis resort, tourists could benefit of high quality accommodation in hotels, chalets, villas. Also, in Sibiu county, there are many tourist and agro-tourist guesthouses where accommodation tariffs could be cheaper than in the resort. Restaurants offer a large variety of dishes [31].

Vatra Dornei resort is situated in Suceava County, and it is well known as a spa resort, being nick named as the Pearl of Bucovina due to its richness in mineral waters such as: Poiana Negri and Floreni and thermal waters. Winter sports are practice at the altitude of 816-1,251 m on 5.5 km skiing slopes and 5 lifts assure tourists transportation. Also, river rafting on the Bistrita river and paragliding are other tourists' attractions [4, 55].

Cheia resort is situated at the altitude of 871m, at the foot of the Ciucas Mountains, at 60 km distance from Ploiesti, Prahova County. Tourists could apply for various mountain routes, hiking and climbing the Red Mountain, the Zaganu Peak, visiting the Beer Valley, or to visit the Museum of Mine Flowers, Cheia Monastery painted by Gheorghe Tatarascu in 1837. The fresh air, the low atmospheric pressure, and the availability of sleighing and skiing slopes of low altitude attract many tourists year by year [4].

Arieseni resort is situated in Alba County, in the heart of the Apuseni Mountains. It is a beautiful resort with exceptional surroundings. Visitors will be delighted to enjoy the visit to Scarisoara Glacier, Focul Viu and Cetatile Ponorului Caves, the canyons of the Aries river. Also, they could visit the Bears' Cave. The 3 skiing slopes are named Piatra Graitoare, Vartop 1 and 2, and they are endowed with skilifts. The skiing area is situated at the altitude of 1,200m. Vartop ski area is found within Arieseni Resort, in the Bihorului Mountains, subdivision of the Apuseni Mountains. Vartop tourist area is found near the border of Apuseni Natural Park [2, 4, 61].

Ranca resort is located in Gorj County, at 67 km from the City of Tg. Jiu, at the foot of Paring Mountains, at the altitude of 1,650m, its has beautiful mountain routes, 3 skiing slopes endowed with installation for artificial

snow and lightening for night skiing. The resort is the center of hiking, recreation, rest and winter sports in the Parang Mountains. It is also a favored destination for week-ends and winter vacations. For skiing and snowboarding there are 3.4 km slopes on Cornesu Mountain and Papusa Peak and 0.3 km ski routes, as well as 6 lifts for guests' transportation and installation for night skiing. The skiing area is at the altitude 1,580-1,918m.

The resort has many facilities among which the most important are: hotels, chalets, restaurants, sports equipment rentals, guides, skiing instructors etc [4, 47].

Straja resort is situated at the altitude of 1,440m in the Valcan Mountains, in the Jiu Valley, Hunedoara County. It is a new resort which was certified in 2002, and it is a very modern resort, with the largest skiing area. The 12 skiing slopes totalize 33 km, the longest slope having 8.1 km, 6 teleski, 12 cable cars are available for tourists' transportation, and winter sport could be

practiced between the altitude of 1,130m and 1,868m. There are equipments for lightening of the slopes for practicing night skiing, also a gondola, two new chair-elevators. Among the all slopes, Straja slope is the longest one having 3.8 km. The ski resort Straja is the top resort for skiing in Romania at present with 3 out of 5 stars.

Hunedoara County offer many alternatives for tourists' accommodation: hotels, hostels, chalets and also tourist guesthouses and agro-tourist guesthouse with a good correlation between price and service quality [6, 54, 69].

Borsa resort is situated in the Eastern Maramures County, in the Valley of the Viseu River and near the Prislop Pass. It is located at the foot of the Rodna Mountains and Maramures Mountains. The highest peak Pietrosul has 2,303 m belonging to the Rodna Mountains, which have a National Park whose surface is 463 km². It is a well known resort for its baths and also for winter sports. It has a 50m high natural ski jumping hill, 2 lifts and 5 trails, the winter season lasting from December to April [48, 66].

Table 1. The main ski resorts in Romania's mountains and their features

	Resort name	Altitude (m)	Length of skiing slopes and routes (km)	Altitude of skiing (m)	Number of lifts	Night skiing installations	Artificial snow installation
1	Poiana Brasov	1,030	13.7 km slopes, 5 km routes	941-1,783	10	yes	yes
2	Sinaia	850	17.9 slopes and 5 km routs	1,006-2,090	10	Yes	Yes
3	Predeal	1,110	7.4 km slopes and 0.6 km routes	1,040-1,451	2	Yes	Yes
4	Busteni	950-900	2.9 km slopes	1,000-1,295	1	Yes	Yes
5	Azuga	850-950	8 km slopes	978-1,539	6	Yes	Yes
6	Paltinis	1,440	1.6 km slopes	1,400-1,667	2	Yes	Yes
7	Vatra Dornei	795	5.5 km slopes	816-1,251	5	Yes	Yes
8	Ranca	1,650	3.4 km slopes and 0.3 km routes	1,580-1,918	6	Yes	Yes
9	Straja	1,440	33 km slopes	1,130-1,868	12	Yes	Yes
10	Transalpina	1,320	6.1 km	1,320-1,940	5	Yes	Yes

Source: Own synthesis based on the data from [56].

Transalpina-Vidra/Voineasa resort is located at the altitude of 1,320m in the North West Valcea County. It is continuously developing, and since 2012 the Vidra Lake zone, Obirsia Lotrului, Voineasa has become an important tourist attraction due its new skiing slope. The length of skiing slope is

6.1 km and there also 5 lifts for guests' transportation. Winter sport could be practiced at the altitude of 1,320 and 1,940m. From the basis of the slope, a telegondola brings the tourists up to the altitude of 1,800m, from where a teleski continue to

transport them on the Bora Peak at the altitude of 2,000m [57, 58].

Romanians' most preferred mountain resorts for skiing

Based on the results obtained in a of a field survey OLX company regarding Romanians' preferences for mountain resorts, there were selected the top six for resorts for skiing: Poiana Brasov, Sinaia, Predeal, Busteni, Vatra Dornei and Ranca.

For each selected resort, there were taken into consideration the results for the following criteria:

(a)degree of attractiveness, (b) accessibility to the skiing slopes and their quality, (c) quality of the services, (d) price/service quality ratio, (e) the attractiveness for young people.

Then, it was applied the Point Method, rating each resort in a scale 1 point to 6 points, where 1 is the highest rate for the highest obtained percentage and 6 is the lowest one for the lowest percentage.

After summing the points achieved by each resort, it was made the final classification, taking into account the smallest number of points for the top position (Table 2).

Table 2. Top mountain resorts in Romanians' preferences for skiing in 2019

Criterion	Poiana Brasov	Sinaia	Predeal	Busteni	Vatra Dornei	Ranca
Degree of attractiveness	25%	11%	9%	6%	6%	5%
Points	1	2	3	4	4	5
Accessibility to the skiing slopes and theirs quality	20%	9%	14%	6%	5%	5%
Points	1	3	2	4	5	5
Quality of the services	22%	10%	8%	6%	8%	6%
Points	1	2	3	4	3	4
Price/service quality ratio	14%	9%	8%	8%	7%	6%
Points	1	2	3	3	4	5
Attractiveness for young people	26%	10%	12%	7%	4%	4%
Points	1	3	2	4	5	5
Total points	6	14	16	22	24	28
Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6

Source: Own calculations based on the data from [59].

Tourism offer in terms of accommodation capacity in the mountain resorts of Romania

The number of accommodation units

The higher and higher interest of tourists to spend their vacations in the mountain resort was an incentive for modernizing the existing infrastructure in terms of units with function for tourist accommodation and to built new units. This trends has become more visible during the last two decades.

In the analyzed period, 2010-2020, the number of units for tourist accommodation increased 2.28 times from 1,038 units in 2010 to 2,370 units in the year 2020. In the total number of accommodation units existing in Romania's tourism, the weight of the units existing in the mountain resorts increased from 19.87% in 2010 to 27.52% in 2020, which reflects that the mountain areas are developing their infrastructure for visitors' accommodation in a faster rate than at the national level (Fig. 1).

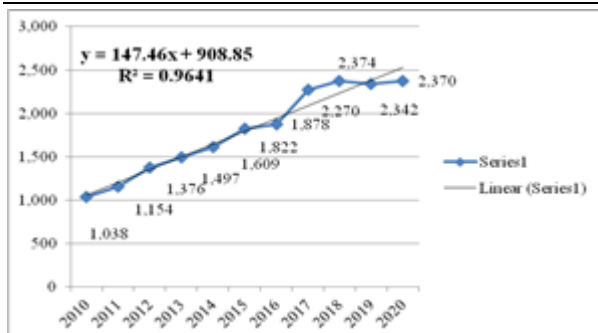


Fig. 1. Dynamics of accommodation units in the mountain resorts, Romania, 2010-2020

Source: Own design and calculations based on [17].

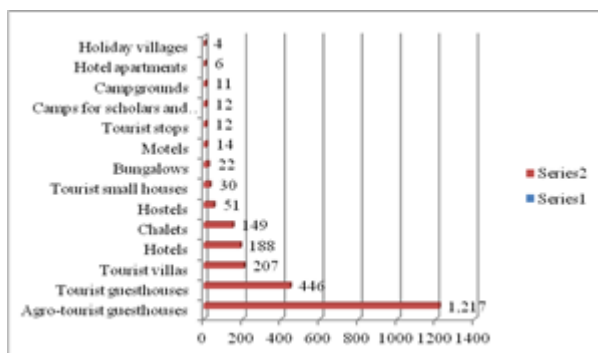


Fig. 2. Structure of accommodation units in the mountain resorts in 2020, Romania

Source: Own design based on [17].

In 2020, within the 2,370 units of accommodation in the mountain resorts, agro-tourism guest houses accounted for 1,217 units, representing 51.3%, being followed on the second position by tourist guest houses whose number was 446 (18.8%), on the 3rd position came tourist villas 207 (8.7%), hotels

188 (7.9%), chalets 149 (6.2%), hostels 51 (2.1%), tourist small houses 30 (1.2%) and the rest other forms of accommodation (Fig. 2).

The number of accommodation units in 2020 in the mountain resorts represent 27.52% of the total number of accommodation units existing in Romania's tourism. The fact that agro-tourist guesthouses and tourist guest houses represent 70% reflect the development of small business in mountain tourism, a good ratio between price and accommodation and board services, a lower price compared to hotels, and these are the reasons why most of the tourists prefer to stay in these types of units. Tourist villas came on the third position and they a little bit expensive compared to guesthouses and are preferred mainly by families. The hotels came on the fourth position and even though they have different number of stars, the most preferred are the three stars hotels and also the luxury hotels, depending on the income per family.

The number of places has also registered an ascending trend during the last decade.

If in 2010, in the mountain resorts there were 35,426 places (beds) in the accommodation units with tourist function, in 2020, their number reached 63,943, being by 80.49% higher than in the first year of the study (Fig. 3).

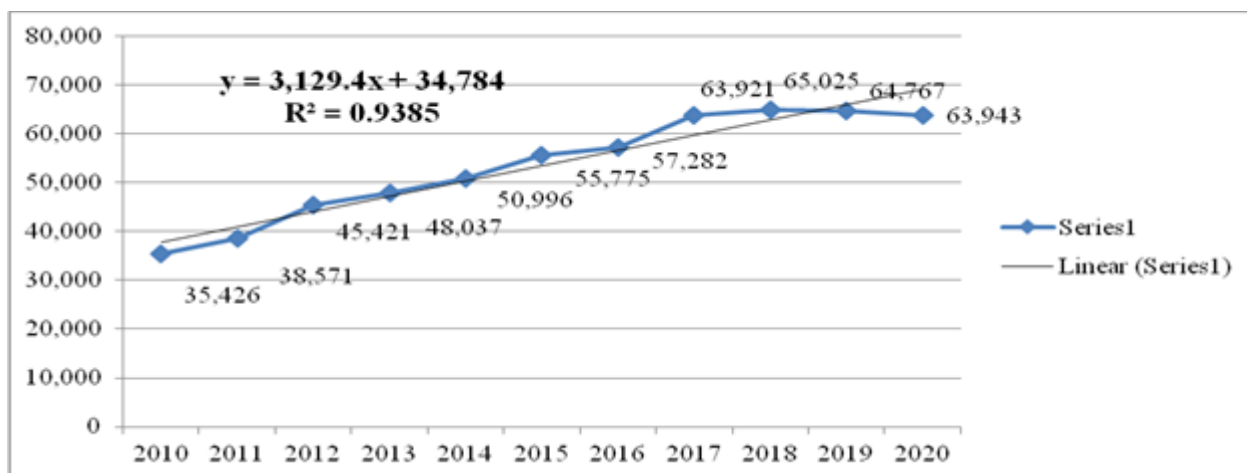


Fig. 3. Dynamics of the number of places in accommodation units in the mountain resorts, Romania, 2010-2020

Source: Own design and calculations based on [17].

The share of the places in the mountain resorts in the total number of places existing in Romania's tourism increased from 11.36% in the year 2010 to 17.85% in the year 2020.

Tourism demand in the mountain resorts

Number of tourist arrivals increased year by year, reflecting visitors' preferences for spending their vacations in the mountain areas either in summer season, in winter season and in any season of the year and even in week-ends. In fact, week-ends have become a common moment for short holidays in many families and also for young people.

In the mountain resorts, the number of tourists arrivals reached 2,305,517 in the year 2019, being by 2.82 times higher than in the year 2010, when it accounted for only 814,973 arrivals (Fig. 4).

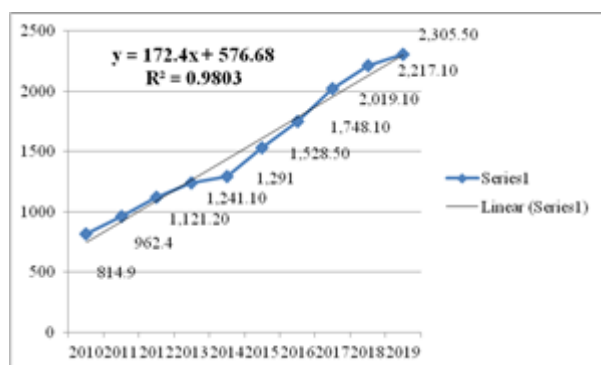


Fig. 4. Dynamics of tourist arrivals in the mountain resorts, Romania, 2010-2019 (Thousands)
 Source: Own design and calculations based on [17].

The share of the total tourist arrivals in the mountain resorts in the total number of arrivals in Romania's tourism raised from 13.42% in 2010 to 17.23 % in 2019.

Romanians are the main category of tourists who prefer to spend their holidays in the mountain resorts of Romania and their number increase year by year from 726,320 in 2010 to 2,109,379 in 2019, when it was 2.89 times higher (Fig. 5).

The share of the Romanians in tourist arrivals in the mountain resorts increased from 89.36% in 2010 to 91.49% in 2019.

Despite that international arrivals have smaller figures, their number also raised from 86,653 in the year 2010 to 196,138 in 2019, meaning + 126.34%.

This is explained by the fact that Romania has beautiful landscapes in the mountains, accommodation and board services satisfy foreign tourists' desires and prices are lower than in other countries.

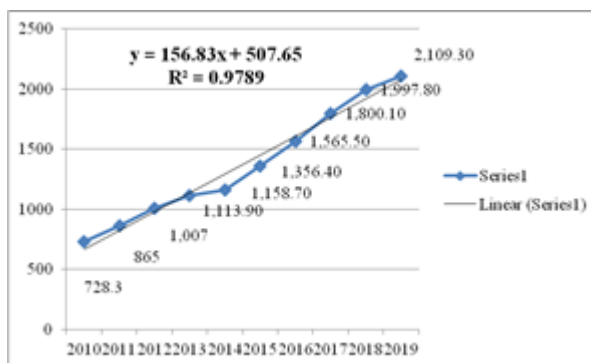


Fig. 5. Dynamics of Romanian tourists' arrivals in the mountain resorts, Romania, 2010-2019 (Thousands)
 Source: Own design and calculations based on [17].

Number of overnight stays also registered an ascending trend. If in the mountain resorts, in 2010, it was recorded a number of 1,772,859 overnight stays, in 2019, it was achieved 4,810,148 stays, that is 2.71 times more than in the beginning of the analyzed decade (Fig. 6).

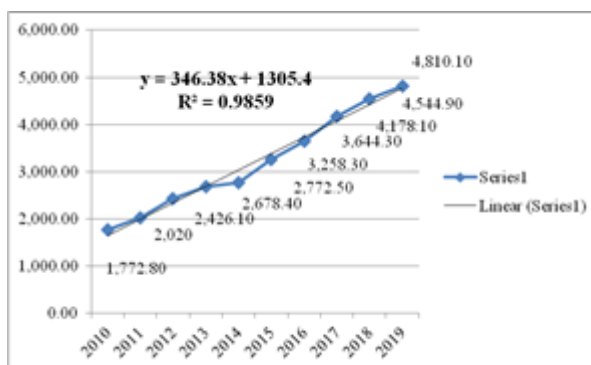


Fig. 6. Dynamics of overnight stays in the mountain resorts, Romania, 2010-2019 (Thousands)
 Source: Own design and calculations based on [17].

The overnight stays carried out by Romanian visitors in the mountain resorts increased 2.8 times in the same interval, from 1,578,441 stays in 2010 to 4,421,424 stays in 2019.

As a result, the share of overnight stays of the Romanians in total overnight stays in the mountain resorts increased from 89.03% in 2010 to 91.91% in 2019.

Analyzing the importance of mountain resorts in Romania's tourism based on the criterion

number of overnight stays, we may affirm that if in 2010 the share of stays in the mountain resorts accounted for only 11.04%, in 2019, their weight was 15.98%.

CONCLUSIONS

The study pointed out the increased importance of the mountain resorts in Romania's tourism. The beautiful landscapes in any season, the large range of activities which could be practiced, the offer of accommodation opportunities of high quality and various prices, the facilities for practicing winter sports especially skiing have contributed to the continuous growth of tourist flows and overnight stays, to the increase of the efficiency in mountain tourism, creating jobs and a higher income flow.

Romania has more than 100 mountain resorts and also hundreds of localities situated in the mountain areas, with a wonderful scenery and breathtaking splendors and treasure which must be discovered.

More than 95 resorts are suitable for skiing and during the last decade they have been modernized to satisfy better ski lovers expectations.

The most attractive mountain resorts are Poiana Brasov, the leader in the field, situated close to the medieval City of Brasov, followed by the necklace of charming resorts from the Prahova Valley: Sinaia, Busteni, Predeal, Azuga, continuing with Paltinis resort close to the marvelous medieval Sibiu city, Vatra Dornei, the pearl resort of Bucovina, Transalpine which has appeared recently on the map of ski resorts and which is in a continuous development.

Tourist arrivals reached 2.3 million in the mountain resorts in 2019, being 2.8 times more than in 2010. They represent 17.2% of total Romania's visitors. Romanians represent 91% of the total number of tourists, and their number and foreign tourist number is continuously increasing.

In 2019, in the mountain resorts of Romania, a number of over 196 thousand foreign tourists spent their holidays, which means 2.2 times more than in 2010.

Also, the number of overnight stays increased 2.8 times, accounting for 4.42 million in 2019. The offer of accommodation units and places has responded to the high demand, and in 2019, the mountain resorts had 2,370 units, of which about 70% were represented by tourist and agro-tourist guesthouses, 8.7% tourist villas, 7.9% hotels and 6.2% chalets etc. Their number represent 27.5% of Romania's tourism accommodation units.

The number of places also increased by 80.4%, reaching 63,943 in 2019, accounting for 17.8% of the total places existing in Romania's tourism.

Mountain area resources in terms of natural landscapes, biodiversity, local economy, humans, cultural and historical heritage have to be better valorized, developed and promoted to attract more tourists, increase income of the local communities, living standard of the population and also to satisfy much better tourists desires.

Mountain resorts for skiing have to continue their efforts to improve infrastructure in terms of access roads, buildings, equipments, installations, facilities, to enlarge the range of activities to offer the tourists unforgettable vacations and their expectations to be entirely covered

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